

# Flight plans

## Schoolchildren learn kite-related lessons

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Flying on wings of wonder, kites crafted by kids swooped and soared.

After working out math problems, after designing patterns from paper, students put scissors, tape, and hope into creating colorful kites.

Not trying to be a Debbie Downer, but rather emphasizing the reality, their instructor cautioned the class about first-time, kite-flying optimism. "Don't be upset if your kite doesn't fly at all," teacher Stephanie Tanner said.

Oh, but the handmade kites — gold, red, pink, blue — did take flight on the Dorr Elementary School playground, where successes were accented with exclamation points.

"It's flying! It's really flying!" said 11-year-old Rosemary Luong, one of several fifth-grade students in Mrs. Tanner's class where the pre-teens spent a few hours learning about kites and how to build them. They learned about spars, the keel, bridle, vent, and streamers.

Kite-related lessons involved history, geometry, reading, as well as math. Students seemed frustrated at times, but they were eager to get those kites into the air, and their problem-solving skills kicked in.

The students are enrolled in a Learning Enrichment and Acceleration Program (LEAP) through the Educational Service Center of Lake Erie West. Dorr Elementary is located in the Springfield school district.

On test-flying day Sedric Shimatzki, 11, seemed to concentrate his kite into action, and up, up, up went his blue kite after some trial and error with wind direction and snarled string.

"I did it. I am flying a kite," he said, paying close attention to the string, and much to his amazement, the kite did not just go up a few feet, but it sailed as tall as stately trees. Then, in an instant, a branch reached out its fingers to clutch onto the kite. Disappointment dashed Sedric's spirits.

His classmate Kyle Sell, 11, quickly offered to climb the tree to get the kite.

Their teacher tried a different approach: a gentle tug on the string swiftly released the kite from the tangle of twigs.

At the other side of the playground, Traevon Roberts, 11, and Aryss Ruley, 10, adjusted kite tails — torn from tiger-patterned cloth — and checked and rechecked lines of string, but continued to have difficulty flying their kites.

Meantime, Kyle's kite acted like a whirligig, spinning, spinning, and eventually, his kite, decorated with an array of stickers, crash-dived into the dirt. Earlier he had commented, "I have never flown a kite, let alone made one."

"Do you think there were too many stickers?" Kyle asked his teacher. Maybe, she replied.

Meantime, Rosemary's kite fluttered as if in a scene from Mary Poppins, prompting some onlookers to sing lyrics from one of the film's popular song: "Let's Go Fly A Kite" — "Up to the highest height! Let's go fly a kite and send it soaring. Up through the atmosphere. Up where the air is clear."

Mrs. Tanner recalled watching Mary Poppins, and was intrigued by the kite flying scenes in the movie. "I tried to make a kite out of paper," she said, and the end result? Well, she said, "It wasn't pretty."

As the student-made kites climbed higher and higher, it was time for more math. Kyle paced off distance; calculations were made, revealing that Rosemary's kite reached a height of 193.16 feet, based on specific measurements students had practiced before heading out to the playground.

"This is a great place to fly a kite," Rosemary said.

Kyle, still sad over his crumpled kite, said "on a windy day maybe."

Then, class was ending. Mrs. Tanner told the kite-makers that it was time to wrap things up. And the sheer, unbridled joy of kite flying could be heard across the playground as students begged and pleaded for more time, a few more minutes. Please.

But it was time to head back into the school. Students, however, vowed to fly kites another day, to watch paper and string dance on the breeze. It's fun, they said. It's a good time spent outdoors.

After all, kite flying is, in a word, supercalafragilisticexpialidocious.

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BLADE PHOTOS by KATIE RAUSCH

Sedric Shimatzki, 11, flies his homemade kite during class at Dorr Elementary School.



Rosemary Luong, 11, traces the outline of her kite before cutting it out.



Students calculate how high their kites will fly.



Aryss Ruley, 10, left, Kyle Sell, 11, center, and Traevon Roberts, 11, listen to their teacher, Mrs. Tanner.



Aryss Ruley, 10, and other students cut out their kite patterns.



Traevon Roberts, 11, gets his home-made kite off the ground.

Rosemary Luong, 11, watches her kite take off.



Aryss Ruley, 10, lets her kite take flight.